















# RATIONALISM,

AS EXHIBITED IN THE WRITINGS OF CERTAIN

CLERGYMEN OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

## A LETTER

TO THE

CLERGY AND CANDIDATES FOR HOLY ORDERS,

OF THE

*Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States;*

SET FORTH BY DIRECTION OF THE

HOUSE OF BISHOPS,

AT THE LATE GENERAL CONVENTION.

CINCINNATI:

C. F. BRADLEY, PRINTER, 149 MAIN STREET.

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At the late General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the undersigned, as one of the Committee, appointed by the House of Bishops to report, for its adoption, a draft of a Pastoral Letter, to be addressed, in its name, as usual, to the Clergy and Laity of the whole Church, prepared and submitted a paper, two-thirds of which was occupied with the subject named in the Title of this Letter. That paper having been read to the House, it seemed best to a majority of the Bishops that the part referred to, instead of being addressed under the form of the usual Pastoral Letter to all the Church, should be issued as a special address to the Clergy and Candidates for Orders. A resolution was, therefore, moved by the Bishop of New York, and adopted, of which the following is a copy :

*Resolved*, "That the Right Reverend the Bishop of Ohio, be requested to issue so much of the able paper read by him, as relates to the subject of Rationalism, in the form of an Address to the Clergy and Theological Students, with such additions, in the form of notes, or otherwise, as he may think likely to be useful."

"Adopted *nemine contradicente*. Extract from the Minutes.

ATTEST.

LEWIS P. W. BALCH,

*Secretary to House of Bishops.*

In compliance with that resolution, the paper referred to is here published. The reader will have no difficulty in separating it from such additions as, under the permission of the House of Bishops, have since been made. These are confined to the notes; (all of which have been added) and to that brief portion of the text which concludes the Letter, and which begins a few lines after the last note.

The Edition of the Essays and Reviews, from which extracts are made, is the 2nd London.

CHAS. P. McILVAINE,

*Bishop of the Diocese of Ohio.*

CINCINNATI, December 15, 1865.

To the Clergy and Candidates for Orders of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States of America.

DEAR BRETHREN :

IN consideration of our duty to God, and His Church, as those who are "set for the defence of the Gospel," and also of the solemn vow of our consecration, that "with all faithful diligence" we will endeavor to "banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word," we, your Bishops, desire to address you on a subject which the aspect of the times invests with special importance.

In the Pastoral Letter of the House of Bishops, in 1814, certain encouragements as to the state and prospects of true religion, derived from what was then the aspect of the times, were presented. Prominent among them was "the visible decline of infidelity, and the growing disrepute attaching to activity in its cause." The form of infidelity, then referred to, was that of the French Philosophers, towards the end of the last century; which, as it made no concealment of its determination wholly to exterminate Christianity, soon reached the decline of its power. But it was a decline only of that special and extreme *form* of infidelity. Infidelity itself only *seemed* to decline. Satan was not yet bound.

“The carnal mind” was still “enmity against God.” The “evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” was as fertile as ever in its devices. In the more refined and reserved scepticism of German rationalism, it made its next and not its less dangerous appearance; extending its branches to our own country, under names and forms which disguised its intrinsic character, and leading many away into denial of the essential truth of the Gospel. All this was exterior to our own communion. And, fenced about as our communion is, by ancient creeds, and by “articles of religion,” as well as by the required use of a common liturgy, wherein the profession and inculcation of distinctive Gospel truth is wrought into the whole texture of our daily public worship, and is most intimately associated with our whole religious life, we have fondly, and too confidently, trusted the evil would so remain. The counsel of God’s word, “let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” is as important to Churches as to individuals. If we restrict the expression, *our Communion*, to that of the Protestant Episcopal Church, in the United States, we are thankful to entertain the hope that the form of evil, in view, has not made its appearance among us. But there is a communion with which ours is so nearly identified that, in a most important sense, the two are one. Between our Church and the Church of England, besides the fellowship by which all true believers in Christ are joined together in the one universal “household of faith,” there is the special bond, arising out of our having the same standards of doctrine, the same forms of worship in every thing but matters of incidental importance, the same terms of communion, the same



requirements and vows in the ordination of ministers, and nearly the same historical illustration of them all. The Clergy of the Church of England are readily received to our pulpits, and to the charge of our parishes. Thus the teaching of the ministry of that Church is only second to that of our own Clergy, as indicative of the true interpretation of our doctrinal position. If essential error appear among the former, accompanied with the claim of a right to teach the same, as consonant not only with the duty of professed ministers of Christ, but with the solemn vows and obligations of ministers of the Church of England; and if such teaching receive no condemnation or restraint by the formal exercise of ecclesiastical authority; then, not only may it obtain a wide circulation among us, under the indirect sanction of such circumstances; not only may we justly expect that, as the soil of men's mind is so much the same in one Church as in another, such seed will soon be found bearing fruit in our pulpits; but we must not wonder if it be widely inferred that it is compatible with a sincere profession of the doctrines of our Church; or at least not so incompatible but that it should be allowed free scope to guide the spiritual instruction of our people.

We have thus, in a measure, explained our sense of duty in calling your attention to writings which, though not of us, are among us, and in their authorship have a very near connection with us. We refer to the volume entitled, "*Essays and Reviews*," written by and published under the names of seven English Churchmen, all but one of whom are Clergymen of high official position; and also to the writings of one of the Colonial Bishops

of the same Church, whose name needs no mention. These works have been widely published and purchased in this country, and have been productive of no little harm in the influence they were designed to exercise. It is not compatible with the limits of this address, nor is it necessary to our present purpose, that we should enter so far into the teaching of these works, as to give you a full idea of their character. But something in that direction is necessary to the result we wish to reach.\*

In the Essays and Reviews, the *Inspiration of the Scriptures is positively denied*.

We do not mean that inspiration in some sense is not granted.† We mean inspiration in the only sense worth speaking of, implying a supernatural gift of God, co-extensive with the Canonical Books of Scripture, and such as to constitute them an authoritative and final rule of faith. *That* is denied. We need give no more than

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\*It will be seen that, in our citations from the Essays and Reviews, we make no effort to adjust the relative responsibility of the several writers, for the effect of their joint production. We pay no attention to their plea that the Authors of the Essays "are responsible for their respective articles only." Had each published his own article singly, associating it in no sense with the others, the plea would be more worthy of respect. But each Writer is one of a *combination*. Each article is one of a volume. Each gets greatly the mere notoriety, importance and influence, and works the more harm, because of its connection, in the same volume, with all the rest. The seven writers belong to a certain school or class, sympathizing with each other in a certain object—which object is somewhat declared when, in their joint address to the reader, they express the hope "that *the Volume* will be received as an attempt to illustrate the advantage derivable to the cause of religion and sacred truth, from a *free handling*" of such subjects as are treated therein. Thus they make themselves jointly responsible for that *free handling*—whatever it is. What it is, we shall endeavor, in part, to show in the subsequent pages.

† "The philosophy of the age does not discredit the inspiration of Prophets and Apostles, though it may sometimes believe it in *poets, legislators, philosophers* and others gifted with high genius."—*Essays*, &c., p. 140.



the following passage in evidence:—"For any of the higher or supernatural views of Inspiration, there is no foundation~~s~~ in the Gospels or Epistles. There is no appearance in their writings that the Evangelists or Apostles had any inward gift, or were subject to any power external to them, different from that of preaching or teaching which they daily exercised; nor do they anywhere lead us to suppose that they were free from error."\*

After finding the New Testament thus excluded from claim to any Inspiration above the natural gifts of the writers, there is no need to enquire how much is conceded to the Old Testament Books. All of them, St. Paul wrote, "*were given by Inspiration of God.*" But we are told in the above citation, that St. Paul had no such supernatural gift as would assure us that, in such testimony, he was "free from error."

But there is even a further reach of denial than that of Inspiration. *All revelation, in any proper or important sense, is denied.* We do not assert that revelation, in some minor sense of the term, is not conceded.† But such revelation as implies any supernatural gift from

\* Essays and Reviews, p. 345.

† Revelation, in some sense, is not denied. The necessity of miracles to the proof of Revelation is denied, p. 140. But what sort of revelation is that which can be proved without such evidence? Of course a revelation that does not involve the supernatural. Hence they speak of "*the revelation of civilization.*" "The point," they say, "which the modern turn of reasoning most calls in question is the impossibility to conceive of a revelation given except by means of miracles." That modern turn of reasoning is evidently what they agree with. "It rather adopts (they say) the belief that a revelation is then most credible when it appeals least to violation of natural causes. Thus, if miracles were in the estimation of a former age, among the chief *supports* of Christianity, they are, at present, among the main difficulties and hindrances to its acceptance," p. 140.

God to man; such revelation as is declared when St. Peter says, that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" *that* is denied as having any existence, or at least, as having any sufficient proof. The idea of a revelation from God involves, essentially, a *supernatural* communication. But we are met with the affirmation, in so many words, "that no testimony can reach to the supernatural;" that the belief that any thing "is due to supernatural causes is entirely dependent on the powers of belief and assumptions of the parties."\* If we appeal to miracles and prophecy in proof of revelation, we are told that "the enlarged critical and inductive study of the natural world cannot but tend powerfully to evince the inconceivableness of imagined interruptions of natural order, or supposed suspensions of the laws of matter,"† and hence, that "the essential question of miracles stands quite apart from any consideration of testimony." Put this with the declaration that "in nature and from nature, by science and by reason, we neither have nor can possibly have any evidence of a Deity working miracles,"‡ and the rejection is complete of all evidence of revelation. For when *reason and testimony* are pronounced incapable of such evidence, where else can we go? But with the denial of miracles goes, of course, the denial of those two great and head miracles of Christianity, the Incarnation of the Son of God and His Resurrection. And with His Resurrection goes the whole Gospel of our salvation, under the solemn decision of St. Paul, "If Christ be not risen your faith is vain. Ye are yet in your sins."

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\* Essays and Reviews, p. 107. † P. 110. ‡ P. 141.

Again; *the supremacy of the dictates of every man's own natural light*, over the authority of the Scriptures, to modify or reject their testimony, is maintained. It is stated as the praise of the Bible, that "it is hindered from exercising a despotism over the human spirit;" which, of course, means that it is hindered from exercising *authority without appeal*. If the Bible could demand such authority, we are told "it would become an outer law at once," which it is pronounced *not to be*, "inasmuch as it imposes on us no yoke of subjection," and that "we use the Bible, not to override, but to evoke the voice of conscience."\*

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\*"We use the Bible," they say, "some consciously, some unconsciously, not to override, but to evoke the voice of conscience. When conscience and the Bible appear to differ, the pious Christian immediately concludes that he has not really understood the Bible." Let us apply this—A man says his conscience is against the idea that God laid on Jesus the iniquities of us all, as a vicarious sacrifice; or that God will punish the finally impenitent with "everlasting destruction;" he hence concludes that he has not correctly understood the Bible, in supposing it to teach such doctrines, and that, however they may make parts of other men's creeds, whose consciences are not like his, he is right in rejecting them; and consequently, that whether a man's belief embrace or reject this or that doctrine of the Scriptures is no criterion of his title to the name or the privileges of a Christian, no test of his right to a membership in the Church, or a place at its sacraments.

But we quote more to the same effect, and all from the Essay, (Dr. Temple's,) which is justly regarded as the least offensive of all, "The Bible in fact is hindered by its form from exercising a despotism over the human spirit; if it could do that, it would become an outer law at once; but its form is so admirably adapted to our need, that it wins from us all the reverence of a supreme authority, and yet imposes on us no yoke of subjection. This it does by virtue of the principle of private judgment, which puts conscience between us and the Bible, making conscience the supreme interpreter, whom it may be a duty to enlighten, but whom it can never be a duty to disobey."—pp. 44, 45.

Thus, while the Bible is said to *win* from us the reverence of a supreme authority, it does not *claim* or *exercise* such authority. Conscience is thus supreme, whether enlightened or not. The authority of the Bible is subject to that of conscience. What conscience? we ask. That of all mankind? But how shall each man who asks what he must believe and do to be saved, ascertain that universal conscience?



Thus it is sorrowfully plain that, in these writings, the way is laid wide open for every man to enter upon the whole field of Scripture truth, whether as to fact, doctrine, or precept, and modify, reject, or transform, what is contained therein, from all natural meaning, into a mere mythical ideality, (which is but another name for rejection and unreality,) as may suit what is called his own "*verifying faculty*."

And what have we next, but just what we might expect from such preparation, the assertion that while "the application of ideology to the interpretation of Scripture, the doctrines of Christianity and the formularies of the Church, may be carried to excess, so as to leave in the sacred records no historical residue whatever," (the German infidel Strauss being given as an example of such excess, because he "resolved into an ideal the whole of the historical and doctrinal person of Jesus,") it is, nevertheless, contended that "liberty must be left to all, as to the extent to which they apply the principle, *for there is no authority which can define the limits within which it may be reasonably exercised;*" and "he who is satisfied with accepting, in an unquestioning spirit, and as if they were literal facts, all particulars

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Then is it, the conscience of a part of mankind? But how shall such a man adjust, and choose among, the different decisions of human consciences? It means, of course, his own conscience. The use of the Bible is only to *evoke its voice*, not to rule it. Thus the Bible loses all its position as a Rule of faith and life. The supreme Rule is as diverse as the voices of the consciences of all mankind. Such is the bearing of the following from another Essay:—"Jesus Christ has not revealed his religion as a theology of the intellect, nor as an *historical faith*; and it is a stifling of the true Christian life, both in the individual soul and in the Church, to require of many men a unanimity in speculative doctrine, and a uniformity of historical belief which can never exist." We shall see in the next note what, in their estimation, are "*speculative doctrines*," pp. 204,-5.

of a wonderful history, because, in some sense, it is of God, exhibits the excess of a dull and unpainstaking acquiescence." All this is applied to the person of our blessed Lord, (horrible as it seems, coming as it does from professed ministers of Christ, under vows of conformity to such teaching as that of our Creeds, Articles, and Liturgy,) in these most painful words, "It by no means follows that there are not traits in the Scriptural person of Jesus which are better explained by referring them to an ideal rather than a historical origin."\*

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\*Pp. 200, 201. Here we have the operation of each man's conscience, overriding Scripture, and deciding the latter to be misunderstood when it is contrary to the former. The ground has been taken that "liberty must be left to all as to the extent to which they will apply the principle of ideology," that is, in making Scripture *fit* their own inward light or conscience. And here is a specimen of the result. "The ideologian is evidently in possession of a principle which will enable him to stand on charitable relations to persons of very different opinions from his own, and of very different opinions mutually. And if he has perceived to how great extent the history of the origin itself of Christianity rests ultimately upon *probable* evidence, his principle will relieve him from many difficulties which might otherwise be very disturbing. For relations which may repose on doubtful grounds, as matter of history, and as history be incapable of being ascertained or verified, may yet be equally suggestive of true ideas with facts absolutely certain. The spiritual significance is the same of the transfiguration of opening blind eyes, etc., etc., whatever links may be deficient in the traditional record of particular events." This is applied to our Lord's birth of the House of David, and it is declared that "he is none the less Son of David, Priest Aaronical or Royal Priest Melchizedecan, *in idea and spiritually*, even if it be unproved whether he were any of them in historic fact." Our Lord's "birth in the *city* of David," and "other circumstances of His infancy," are treated in the same way. But worst of all, *His Incarnation!* "So again the incarnification of the Divine Immanuel remains, although the angelic appearance which heralded it in the narratives of the Evangelists," (which are the evidences of its real character,) "may be of ideal origin, according to the conceptions of former days." That is, if we so idealize the Incarnation as to take away all its historic reality, "the spiritual significance is the same." Then follows this broad sentence. "The ideologian may sometimes be thought skeptical or doubtful as to the historical value of related facts; but the historical value is not always to him the most important, frequently it is quite secondary." Pp. 202,-3.

Thus has a daring hand presumed to touch, and endeavour to mutilate, the holy Ark of God's Covenant of Grace and Salvation, in the adorable person of Jesus, the Lord, as revealed from heaven, and in the Scriptures of Truth, declared unto us by the Holy Ghost.

We may well stand here and ask how far may this convenient process extend? If it be allowed to change some part of the Scripturally declared person of our Lord into a mere idea, why not all? Yea, and all of His Scriptural history, of His sacrifice of propitiation on the Cross, and of His present intercession in heaven, and all the Person and work of the Holy Ghost, and so turn into mere idea whatever distinguishes Christianity from a mere religion of every one's own natural reason or conscience?

The answer is, as we have already quoted their words, "There is no authority which can define the limits within which this idealizing process may be reasonably exercised."

It is in the free use of this large liberty, that we find the humiliating spectacle of a Colonial Bishop of the Church of England, zealously and directly assaulting the historical verity of a large part of the Old Testament; denying that the Books of Moses, to which our Lord so often referred as having been written by Moses, and as authority in matters of fact and faith, were so written, and are worthy of such deference; thus leaving us avowedly to the alternative of supposing our Lord to be unconsciously in error concerning those books, or to have taught what he knew to be untrue.\*

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\* Bishop Colenzo has published three volumes, or "Parts," on the Old Testa-



How far these writers have actually carried their alleged liberty into insidious expressions of doubt, or express denial, of the vital substance of the Gospel, such as the divinity of our blessed Lord, His various Atonement, Justification by Faith, only through Him, as our righteousness, the Personality and Office of the Holy Ghost, especially His essential work in our regeneration and sanctification; eternal life to those only who come unto God, through Christ Jesus; "the bitter pains of eternal death" to those who come not in that "new and living way;" this question we have no room now to answer. Very significant indications are not wanting that the large liberty claimed, to substitute the ideal for the real, as we have seen, is not unused on such most vital subjects. But to understand their certain fate, as matters of any higher authority than any man's own reason, we have only to remember that for all of them we are dependent wholly on a supernatural revelation, and that such revelation is denied.

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ment Scriptures, the direct object of which is to prove a succession of frauds. He seeks to lead readers to the belief that the first three or four books of the Penteteuch are in a great degree made up of romances, or traditionary tales, prepared by Samuel, centuries after Moses, and imposed on the Jews as reliable history; that Moses wrote none of the books attributed to him; that Deuteronomy was written by Jeremiah, conveyed by fraud into the Holy Place of the Temple, and thence brought to Josiah and palmed on him as a book of Moses; that Isaiah wrote only part of the book which bears his name within and without. Our Lord embraced all these in his solemn sanction, when he said, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded through one rose from the dead." And still more comprehensively, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." Thus issue is joined between the Bishop of Natal and our Lord. And yet the Bishop is indignant that he should be charged with denying the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and speaks of them as "dictated by the Holy Spirit of God."

But we can take no time to go further in this painful review. We regret to have been obliged to go so far. From the examples of the teaching referred to, which have been cited, you may easily judge of its whole real character. Its own chosen name is *Rationalism*. Its more honest name is *Infidelity*. Under high professions of reverence for the Scriptures and Christianity, with the frequent use of language intended to disguise what it is more convenient to insinuate than to avow, there is nothing that is distinctive of Christianity, either in substance, or in the authority on which it is received, that is not so effected by the direct application or the necessary results of the principles avowed in these writings, sometimes in positive denial, sometimes in doubtful questioning, as to be either wholly taken away, or at least subjected to a most ruinous uncertainty.

Such is our view of the published teaching of writers, all but one of whom added to their pages the weight of names of high position among the Clergy of the Church of England. It is not that there is any thing new in it, as expressive of unbelief, or as supporting such expression by argument, that we are led thus to notice it; for it has so much in common with the infidelity of what are known as "the Deistical Writers" of England, in the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, that its every prominent feature is to be found, more or less at large, in the works of those men. By the learned answers of the divines of the Church of England, those writers, whose movement was thought, in their time, to be at least as alarming as that which we now witness, were driven almost out of notice, and in our day they are scarcely

remembered. Such will be the history of the productions we have just reviewed. And it is also worth noticing here, that strong as are often the expressions of the present writers, of reverence for the Scriptures and Christianity, and indignantly as they would repel the idea that they are aiming at the establishment of infidelity, and much as it may be contended that their words of reverence should protect them from such charge; their forerunners referred to, whose infidelity was of the boldest and most recognized character, were by no means their inferiors in such language. None of them were more outspoken in infidelity than Woolston. The great design of his discourses on the miracles of Christ, was to shew that the accounts of the great facts in the Gospels are to be understood wholly in a *mystical* or *allegorical* sense, and that, taken in the literal and historical sense, they are false and absurd. And yet he declared, in those very discourses, that he was "the furthest of any from being engaged in the cause of infidels," and that he wrote "for the honor of the holy Jesus and in defence of Christianity." It was too early then, as it is now too late, to venture on such assaults without such professions.\*

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\* This writer is particularly mentioned in the Third Essay as having, with David Hume, directed the attention of Divines to the more pointed consideration of the topic of miraculous evidence. And it is worth remarking that the prominent teaching of Woolston, viz.: that the miracles of Christ are to be taken not in a *literal and historical*, but in a *mystical and allegorical sense*, and the main feature of Hume's attack on miracles, that "no testimony can prove a miracle," are the prominent aspect of that Essay. Woolston asserted that neither the Saviour nor His Apostles meant that His miracles should be taken in the literal, but in the mystical and parabolical sense. But when the Bishop of London represented



But there is a new thing in these writings, namely,—that they came from men who, with a single exception, were Clergymen, (one of them a Bishop,) ordained under,

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him as writing in the cause of Infidelity, he charged the Bishop with “ignorance or malice;” in so doing. Tindal, in his “*Christianity as old as the Creation*,” aimed at shewing that there neither is, nor can be, any *external revelation* distinct from the *internal revelation* in the hearts of all mankind; that all external revelation is absolutely needless and useless, and all pretence thereto due to enthusiasm or imposture. And yet he professed to believe, very like the Essays and Reviews, that “Christianity itself, stripped of the additions that policy, mistake and the circumstances of time, have made to it, is a most holy religion; and that all its doctrines plainly speak themselves to be the will of an infinitely wise and good God.” Morgan, in his *Moral Philosopher*, amidst all his denial of revelation, declared he was “a Christian on the foot of the New Testament.” Bolingbroke is regarded as the connecting link between the infidelity of the English Deists and that of the French Philosophers, and yet he declared that “the Christian system of faith and practice was revealed by God himself; that it is absurd and impious to assert that it was revealed imperfectly. Its simplicity and plainness shewed it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and manifested the divinity of its original.” Poison in sugar is no new invention. When those deistical writers and the authors of the books under our present consideration speak of Christianity, Revelation, etc., with reverence, as if they really believed in them, we must ask *what sort of Revelation, what Christianity?* And the answer is, revelation just as any new light, however the mere result of human progress, under natural laws, is revelation; such Christianity as requires no belief in, and seeks no support from, supernatural evidence, and imposes no external law upon any man’s natural light, or conscience, or intuitive perceptions, (whichever expression be preferred,) in regard to his religious belief and life.

There is a substantial agreement between the present English skeptics as represented in the Essays and Reviews, etc., and the English Deists of the past, in the following grave particulars: the supremacy and sufficiency of man’s natural light; an external supernatural revelation needless, incapable of proof, and as a final law of belief and life, intolerable; the use of the terms “divine inspiration” and “divine revelation,” with no higher meaning than such increase of light, moral or physical, as takes place under the natural laws of human progress; direct assaults upon the historic verity of various books of Scripture, with charges of contradiction, error and imposture; the denial of miracles as capable of proof or as applicable in proof of revelation; and the right to idealize the supernatural in Scripture history, especially in the person, life and works of Christ, so as to turn its historic reality into *myth*, or, which is the same thing, into fable.

and solemnly pledged to, the teaching of the formularies of doctrine which are common to the Church of England and ours. One of them has since died; the rest, instead of retiring from positions and duties for which they have made themselves so disqualified, continue therein, taking advantage of their ecclesiastical dignities, to give the more weight and currency to their evil words, and claiming, moreover, the right so to do. It is this remarkable phenomenon that has especially made us feel it a solemn duty to address you on this occasion. If their position be one of consistency and loyalty in the Church of England, it would be equally so in the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America. If it be just and right that men, of such views and teaching, should continue to occupy the pulpits, and officiate in all the ordinances of our parent Church, especially to hold the office of a Bishop therein; then, if teachers of such views should arise in our own Ministry, (and who will say there is no danger?) it would be just as right to leave them unrebuked and unrestrained; and then the awful spectacle might stare us in the face, not only of Presbyters in charge of Churches, but of a Bishop in charge of a Diocese, shocking the moral sense of the whole community, bringing disgrace upon all the Church, giving songs of rejoicing to such as sit "in the seat of the scornful," and doing "despite to the Spirit of grace," by repudiating the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and laboring to undermine the whole precious Gospel of our salvation. Hence, as Bishops of the American Episcopal Church, out of a just regard to our faithfulness in the high trust committed to us as Watchmen and Shepherds, as well as teachers, of the flock of Christ, we have looked

earnestly to the authorities of that Church, with which we are so affectionately united in the closest communion, and whose highest spiritual welfare engages the strongest desires of our hearts, for the adoption of adequate measures to vindicate our common testimony to the truth of the Gospel, and set the proper mark upon what is endeavouring with so much zeal and boldness to make it of none effect. That such measures have not been taken, is not to be laid at the door of our venerated brethren, the Bishops of the Church of England.

We are sure that the teaching we have had under consideration receives the strongest condemnation of all of them.\* What hinders the formal expression of such condemnation, otherwise than by their individual or united declarations, we have nothing to do with. But we desire to express to them, and to our brethren of the Clergy and Laity of the Church of England, in general, our affectionate sympathy in the grievous trial through which they are now passing. We assure them of our earnest prayers that they may have all the wisdom and grace which the trial of their faithfulness demands; and that God may be pleased so to sanctify to them the present distress, that it may work the fruits of righteousness, in making that long-honoured fortress of

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\* We have seen it stated, and we know no reason to doubt it, that the Bishop of Natal has been prohibited by every Bishop of the Church of England, in England, from officiating in his Diocese. The faithful endeavour of the Bishop of Salisbury to get the cases of two of the writers of the *Essays and Reviews* properly dealt with by the only Court having cognizance, (composed partly of law officers of the Crown) and the results are well known. The faithful spirit of the Bishop of Cape Town in his proceedings against the Bishop of Natal, has received a formal expression of sympathy and praise from the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church in England.



“the truth, as is in Jesus,” more than ever a witness and light to the whole world.

But, as matters now stand, your Bishops, assembled together on this solemn occasion, believe that towards the Christian Church in all the world, towards our beloved brethren, the Bishops and Clergy and Laity of the Church of England, in their present trial, and towards the whole flock of God, committed to us, we have a duty to perform, which in its solemnity is heightened by the probability that there are those among us who will never have again such opportunity of unitedly bearing their testimony to “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God,” against whatever may gainsay or resist it. In the humble endeavour to discharge that duty, in the fear of God, we declare our conviction that the combined teaching of the writers referred to is nothing better than *infidelity*, in substance and in effect, whatever it may otherwise profess; that its logical tendency is to the utter destruction of all that is essential to the Gospel, and precious to the sinner’s hope of salvation; that it is most abhorrent to our moral sense that men entertaining such views should continue to hold the office of ministers of Christ, and teachers of his Church, especially that they should do so under the declarations of doctrine and the formularies of worship which are common to the Church of England and ours; and still more abhorrent that they should claim the right and the consistency, as ministers so related, of so doing. And we further declare our earnest hope that if ever the grievous calamity and humiliation should befall our Church, of ministers, amongst us, being thus deluded and ensnared, (which may God

in His mercy forbid,) they will not wait for the administration of the right discipline; but will shew, by their own spontaneous surrender of their places, as ministers of this Church, that in having made shipwreck of faith, they have not lost their honesty.

In the efforts of our brethren, the Bishops of the Church of England, to have the authors of some of the writings which we have had under consideration faithfully dealt with by the highest tribunal before which such cases can be brought in that country, the testimony of the formularies of doctrine common to that Church and ours, concerning the Inspiration of the Scriptures, was so treated, that we feel it incumbent on us to give some expression of our minds on that subject.

It is true that, in our formularies, we have no *direct, dogmatic, definition* of the faith of our Church, on that head. But when the universal belief of the age in which those formularies were constructed is considered, in connection with what they do declare, and the manner of such declarations, we are satisfied that no such definition could have made the doctrine of our Church more decided or impressive.

In that age, among all that called themselves Christians, the supernatural Inspiration of the Scriptures was not called in question. To meet any error then in being, it was quite as unnecessary to make a formal article of Faith asserting such Inspiration, as, in the same way, to assert the duty of prayer. And our "Articles of Religion," it is well known, were framed with special reference to errors then urged, more particularly those of the Church of Rome. Not only was such Inspiration a matter of universal acceptance in that age, but the writings of

English Reformers, and of Divines immediately succeeding them, among whom we name, as of the highest representative character, Bishop Jewel and “the judicious” Hooker, exhibit a strength of doctrine on this subject to which no increase can be desired.\*

The question of that age was between Protestants and Romanists, who alike professed belief in the plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures. It had no reference to the question whether all Scripture was given by Inspiration of God? The Church of Rome embraced in the Canon of Scripture sundry books to which the Protestant Reformation refused that honour. The Church of Rome maintained the equal inspiration and authority of tradition, or what she called “the unwritten word;” and that without it, as constituting a joint Rule of Faith with the Scriptures, the latter were not sufficient, not containing (as was said) all things necessary to salvation. So that the question was, *What books constitute the Canon of Scripture?* and *What is their sufficiency?* These questions the English Reformers answered. In framing our “Articles of Religion,” they devoted to that purpose the 6th, entitled, “*Of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation.*” That Article declares what Holy Scripture

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\* Bishop Jewel, in his Treatise on the Holy Scriptures, wrote,—“The Scriptures are the Word of God. What title can there be of greater value? What may be said of them to make them of greater authority than to say, ‘The Lord hath spoken them,’ that ‘they came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’” “There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, but it is written for thy instruction: there is not one jot, but it is sealed and signed with the blood of the Lamb.” Jewel’s Works, Parker’s Society Edition, vol. iv. pp. 1163, 75.

Such was the doctrine of those days. There was no contradiction. See the Homily on the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture.



consists of. "In the name of Holy Scriptures, (it teaches,) we do understand those Canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church." Then follow the names of those books. This enumeration was considered as identical with a declaration of their divine inspiration; because it was the universal doctrine of the Church, Romish or Reformed, that, in the words of St. Paul, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" nor was that plain testimony of the Apostle attempted to be evaded by any of our modern inventions of a something called Inspiration, without implying any gift above the natural faculties of men.

But our Articles go further. For the sake of protesting against that fundamental error of the Church of Rome, on which her whole system of false doctrine is evidentially built, namely, the joint and equal authority of Church tradition, with the written Word of God, they required that every question of faith should be ruled supremely and finally by the Scriptures. For example, our 9th Article pronounces that the declarations of fundamental truth contained in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds "*ought thoroughly to be received; for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.*" This was equivalent to a declaration of *infallibility* as pertaining to the Scriptures, and consequently of the highest Inspiration of God. General Councils of the Church had asserted the duty of a thorough reception of those Creeds. But the Article says nothing of decrees of Councils as the ground of belief. "Most certain warrants of Holy Scripture," by which the infinitely momentous matters of faith contained in those Creeds

are proved, are the only and the sure ground on which is built the duty of thoroughly receiving the same. But how can Scripture furnish "*certain warrants*" on such subjects, so purely dependent on divine revelation, except it be given by Inspiration of God, so as to be, in all things, the Word of God and its testimony of divine authority? Once admit the fallibility of man's wisdom in the Scriptures; reduce their certainty in the least beneath the mark of God's infallibility, and "*certain warrants*" of doctrine they have none. The fact that our Church takes her position so decidedly upon the sufficiency of Scripture, as a most certain Rule of Faith, concerning all that pertains to God's will and our salvation, is the strongest evidence of what she holds to be the Inspiration under which they were written. And this is not confined to an Article of religion which may be placed out of sight. It is repeated every time a Presbyter is ordained or a Bishop consecrated. On every such occasion the question is solemnly asked, "Are you determined to teach nothing as necessary to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the Scripture?" But how can any thing be "*concluded and proved* by the Scripture," pertaining to things so exclusively matters of the counsel and grace of God, as, for example, what is necessary to the salvation of a sinner, unless the word of Scripture be God's Word, in the highest sense of divine inspiration? Was it ever seen that any sect or person submitted to the decision of the Scriptures as a final Rule of Faith, from which there lay no appeal, after having renounced the belief that *all* Scripture is given by divine inspiration? Does the

Church of Rome pretend that any matter of faith can be "concluded and proved," or derives any "*certain warrants*" from *tradition*, without ascribing to tradition a divine, supernatural, Inspiration.

But our Church has an expression to which we could add no increase of strength. After having declared what books make up the Holy Scriptures, she calls them *all*, in the 20th Article, "*God's Word written.*" What is the force of this condensed declaration? What else than that, while all Scripture, in every book and portion, is God's Word, it is all God's Word *as it is written*; not merely as it was conceived in the thoughts of the writers, but as it was *written* by their hands; not merely as they received it from God, but as we have received it, in written form, from them; under the declaration of St. Paul, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope." This passage our Church expands into the Collect,— "Blessed Lord who hath caused *all* holy Scripture to be written for our learning," etc., thus embracing under the Apostles' words, whatsoever of Scripture was written *after* the Old Testament, as well as "*aforetime*," and ascribing the writing directly to divine causation, in other words, making all Scripture to be the "Word of God written," for the learning of all generations of the world, and so that whoever reads may "*by comfort of the Scriptures have hope.*" But where is the comfort of the Scriptures? Of what value, when the soul is troubled with doubts and fears, under the consciousness of sin, and in expectation of the judgment of God. Of what value is the hope founded on



the comfort of the Scriptures, when you have taken from them the authority of a pervading divine inspiration and reduced them to the level of human authority and wisdom? "*Comfort of the Scriptures*" means *comfort from God*, coming with His authority, and thus placed infinitely above the darkness, and uncertainty, and strifes of man's wisdom. "*God's Word written*," applied to all Scripture, decides the doctrine of our Church, that God's Word is not merely *contained* in the Scriptures *somewhere*, but *is* the Scriptures *everywhere*; not merely that by His Inspiration *parts* of Scripture were given, leaving us to say which parts; but that all that belongs to holy Scripture was so given. This is Plenary Inspiration, in the full sense of the words, as opposed to partial. Our Church avoids *theories* of inspiration, binding no man's faith beyond the *fact* of an inspiration co-extensive with the written Word; under the general determination of St. Peter, that "holy men of God spake (wrote) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We are aware that to some the expression of doctrine on the part of our Church would have been more satisfactory had it contained, in so many words, the declaration of St. Paul, that "all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God." We are not of that mind. Our Church, of course, embraces that passage in her doctrine; because it is a part of holy Scripture, all of which she declares to be "God's Word written." But what if she had placed it as her strongest assertion of Inspiration, would it have concluded any thing in these days with gainsayers, whose question is, *what sort of inspiration of God*? Our modern skeptics have no objection to the

divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, if you will allow them to put their own meaning on such words. They speak of a divine inspiration as well as we; but such only as involves nothing supernatural, nothing above man's own faculties. "Homer (they say) was divinely inspired. And so was Milton, and so, and not otherwise, were David, and Daniel, and Matthew, and Paul." Our Church meets the case. She places *an interpretation* on the passage of St. Paul. In calling all Scripture "God's Word written," she gives its Inspiration the sense of a *supernatural* gift of God.\* And when she enlarges her view into the setting forth of that whole written word, as the sole and sufficient Rule of Faith, by which the things of God's mind and grace, as pertaining to our salvation, however beyond the reach of our faculties to discover, are "*concluded and proved*" "*by most certain warrants*," she tells us, in language not to be misunderstood, what, in her view, is meant by being "given by Inspiration of God."

In conclusion, Brethren, we express our earnest prayers for you all; that whatever trials of the steadfastness of our faith may be in store for the Church of God, under His Providence and Grace, who is wont to

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\* No skeptic will deny that "the Revelation of St. John" professes to be a divine and supernatural revelation in the highest sense. Among the multitude of instances that might be brought from the Old and New Testament to shew the use of the phrase, "The Word of the Lord," or, "The Word of God," as implying such inspiration, the second verse of the first chapter of "The Revelation" is particularly deserving of attention. There, what is called in the first verse "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*," which he "signified by his angel unto his servant John," and of which John "bear record," is called "*The Word of God*." Revelation of God and Word of God are convertible terms.

bless, as well by the wordly powers that seek to hurt, as by those which seek her good, you, according to the Apostles exhortation, will so take heed to yourselves and the doctrines of Christ, and so continue in them, "that you may both save yourselves and them that hear you." "Perilous times," St. Paul warned the Church, would come. Perilous, not to her intrinsic safety, for her "life ~~as~~ hid with Christ in God," where no enmities of earth or hell can reach, but perilous to those in the ministry, and out of it, who, while the Ark is safe, may be seduced from its shelter. "The time will come (he said) when they will not endure sound doctrine,  
 \* \* \* and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into *fables*," (μύθους, *myths*.) What was the remedy? What mode of overcoming such great evil did St. Paul enjoin upon the ministry in such times? When sound doctrine would not be endured, and men would not hear it, was it to be held the less confidently or proclaimed the less boldly and constantly, with more of "the enticing words of man's wisdom," more admixtures of other matters to make it less visible in its own proper shape and character? Was "the whole counsel of God," the whole truth "as in Jesus," to be in the least kept back? It is worth your special notice that, immediately in connection with these predictions, and based upon them, comes that solemn adjuration to Timothy: "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing, and His kingdom, **PREACH THE WORD**; *be instant in season, out of season,*" "*do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*" As if he had said, So much the more



preach the Word, when men will not endure it. Trust in God who giveth the increase. "If our Gospel be hid to them that are lost," it is a reason why it should be only the more made known, in all its fullness, that men may be saved. It was in the midst of predictions of such "perilous times," and immediately after he had said, "*Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,*" that St. Paul wrote to Timothy in those memorable words, so applicable to these days, "Continue, thou, in the things which thou has learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." And then, as if some one had asked him, *wherein consists that remarkable sufficiency of the Scriptures*, he adds, (and mark it comes immediately before, "*I charge thee before God, preach the word, etc.*") "All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction, in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

The lesson is, that through the whole warfare of the Gospel in this evil world, the citadel of strength is, "*All Scripture given by Inspiration of God;*" that the ministers' own security against the personal seductions of error, is in the Apostles injunction, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;" that he is to "wax riper and stronger in his ministry," (according to our ordinal) by daily reading and weighing the Scriptures, continually praying for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost;" and that the great weapon



of his warfare, as one set for the defence and advancement of the Gospel in the world, is that "sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God," written for our learning to the end of the world, by which it has pleased God in all generations to shine into the hearts of lost men, "to give them the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

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"BLESSED LORD, WHO HAST CAUSED ALL HOLY SCRIPTURES TO BE WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING; GRANT THAT WE MAY IN SUCH WISE HEAR THEM, READ, MARK, LEARN, AND INWARDLY DIGEST THEM, THAT BY PATIENCE, AND COMFORT OF THY HOLY WORD, WE MAY EMBRACE, AND EVER HOLD FAST THE BLESSED HOPE OF EVERLASTING LIFE, WHICH THOU HAST GIVEN US IN OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST. *Amen.*"

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### ERRATA.

Page 2, in the Resolution for *nemene* read *neminè*.

Page 7, line 3rd, for foundations read foundation.

Page 5, line 17th, for *mind* read *minds*.

Page 13, line 4th, for *various* read *vicarious*.





















